

To The Oak Bluffs Planning Board and Martha's Vineyard Commission,

During the last year we watched as California and Australia have been ravished by fire. As a result, we formed the Fire Emergency Coalition, a group of concerned citizens dedicated to raising awareness, educating and taking action to address the issue of fire hazards here on Martha's Vineyard. Our group hosted the educational forum this past November at the Hebrew Center, in which we examined and discussed wildfire vulnerability, planning, and measures we can take to mitigate the risk of wildfire on Martha's Vineyard.

According to the Town of Oak Bluffs' Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Report, wildfire was identified as one of the top hazards which Oak Bluffs faces. Further, the MVC's 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) for Seven Towns in Duke's County identified wildfire as one of the most significant overall hazards across the whole county, including Oak Bluffs, as dried dead timber accumulates over time throughout the island's forested lands. Based on Cape Cod's 1957 fire, MVC planner Jo-Ann Taylor estimated that wildfire could potentially consume the State Forest in 85 minutes. Our down-Island towns were assigned Hazard Indexes between 8 and 10, on a scale of 10. Vulnerability to wildfire is determined by proximity of development to forested lands and fuel type.

Recent news articles from the MV Times and the Vineyard Gazette have highlighted the island's history with, and its vulnerability to, wildfire:

<https://www.mvtimes.com/2019/11/21/forest-fuel-load-fires-islanders/>

<https://www.mvtimes.com/2020/02/05/fire-on-the-island/>

<https://vineyardgazette.com/news/2019/11/23/threat-wildfire-prompts-discussion-planning-vineyard>

The MVC's website page entitled "Drought and Wildfire" states, "Climate change is bringing more periods of drought, i.e. extended periods of deficient water supply, punctuated by heavy rainstorms. This will increase the risk of wildfires, especially in the spring, before trees have leafed out. Wildfire could strike quickly with potential for great loss of life and property." It continues, "The Vineyard probably has more people and buildings at risk from wildfire than at any time in our history..." and concludes by recommending the reduction of the fuel load, the installation of extensive water supply lines, and "*requiring or promoting greater use of fireproof construction.*"

It is in this context that we want to express our concerns regarding the proposal to install a synthetic field on Martha's Vineyard. From a fire emergency standpoint, the MVRHS proposal raises a number of issues:

- The multi-acre rubberized track surface, shock pad (made of polypropylene / ethylene copolymer), and synthetic carpet each pose toxic fire risk.
- The proximity of the rubber track and synthetic field to both forested areas as well as more densely populated structures (MVRHS, YMCA, MV Arena, Martha's Vineyard

Community Services, and Island Elderly Housing, among others) compound these risks, particularly during wind driven wildfires.

- Two examples of synthetic turf fires in Northern California in 2018 and 2019 are pictured below. Synthetic turf fire produces toxic smoke, releasing potentially hazardous materials into our environment and threatening the safety of first responders and nearby students, etc.

Mowed natural grass has long been utilized as a firebreak. Since there are few suitable substitutes for the rubber track surface, ensuring there is mowed natural grass all around it seems like the most prudent choice from a wildfire standpoint. However, if the Martha's Vineyard Commission and/or Oak Bluffs Planning Board are unable to outright deny construction of this potential toxic fire hazard, we hope that you will consider the following points:

1. Consider whether specialized fire fighting materials, equipment, and/or training will be necessary to protect island firefighters and EMTs as they control a rubber track and synthetic turf fire.
2. Consider adding a firebreak between the track and the nearby tree line near Ryan's Way.
3. Require a proven fire control system that can detect and suppress a rubber track and synthetic turf fire long enough for people in the surrounding area to evacuate. The system should be able to operate automatically in case of power outages.
4. Require a specific "toxic smoke" plan in place should a shelter in place order be given.
5. Consider whether MVRHS as well as nearby buildings including the YMCA, Arena, MVCS, and Island Elderly Housing are airtight enough to keep potentially toxic smoke out, as well as whether the buildings' ventilation systems could operate without using outside air.

We hope the Oak Bluffs Planning Board and Martha's Vineyard Commission will take fire danger seriously when evaluating the merits of this proposal and take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of firefighters, EMTs, MVRHS students and staff, as well as its neighbors.

Sincerely,

The Fire Emergency Coalition

Jeri Dantzig, Mardi Moran, Ann RosenKranz, Nicola Blake, Abe and Rachel Seiman,
Mary Jane Williams

OAK BLUFFS Wildfire Vulnerability

| Developed Land | | | | | Undevel. Land | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Use | # People (other) | # People (July-Aug) | # Buildings | Approx. Value | # People (other) | # People (July-Aug) | # Buildings | Approx. Value |
| | 2.24 per building | 3.93 per building | | | 2.24 per building | 3.93 per building | | |
| Residential | 1823 | 3199 | 814 | \$230,143,940 | 1172 | 2055 | 523 | \$147,868,895 |
| Commercial | | | 3 | \$1,342,800 | | | 16 | \$7,161,600 |
| Industrial | | | 1 | \$272,900 | | | 0 | \$0 |
| Municipal, Public, Non-profit | | | 22 | \$63,813,900 | | | 40 | \$116,025,273 |

Artificial Turf Fire Sending Off Dark Smoke Near Highway 99

June 6, 2018 at 3:57 pm Filed Under: Highway 99, Sutter County



SUTTER COUNTY (CBS13) – Homes are no longer being threatened by a grass fire in Sutter County, but a different kind of grass fire is responsible for dark smoke clouds.

The fire is burning east of Highway 99 at Sankey Road.

The fire has been contained to one lot in the area, but piles of artificial turf nearby have caught fire and are sending smoke into the air.

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Knocked-down power lines ignite turf in Woodland

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Updated: 8:06 PM PDT Sep 23, 2019



KCRA Staff



WOODLAND, Calif. — Knocked-down power lines sparked a fire in artificial turf and spread to a nearby field, the Woodland Fire Department said.